



## **Summary**

### **WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION Recreational Issues Workshop**

March 16, 2015, 5:00 PM  
District Headquarters - B-1 Auditorium  
3301 Gun Club Road  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

**1. Welcome, Opening Remarks and Purpose of Workshop - Newton Cook, Chairman (5d)**

Mr. Cook called the meeting to order at 5:09 pm.

**2. Recreation Discussion, Updates and Future Meeting Topics (25d)**

**Discussion and Announcements**

1. Meeting participant announced Earth Day is April 25th, and proposed working with District staff to assist in organizing a trail cleanup in Water Conservation Area 2
2. The first youth alligator hunt was held at DuPuis Management Area and was successful thanks in part to the help of FWC. There were several other user groups including equestrian users and it was nice that all were able to share the resource while being respectful of others.
3. Participants thanked the District and FWC other agencies including Palm Beach County Environmental Resource Management and Parks and Recreation Department, and the FSCA for assisting and participating in the recent Ocean to Lake eco-adventure. There was record public participation on the hike.
4. Participant requested the possibility of small game hunting on the Mecca property. Staff responded that the area will be going to construction in the near future.
5. A participant shared ideas regarding improving opportunities for duck hunts in the District's Stormwater Treatment Areas. Suggestion 1; modify permit application drawing process to build in preference points for those who were not selected in the previous years. Suggestion 2; issue a standby permit at some time when regular

duck hunting permits are issued thus eliminating long lines of people waiting for a standby permit.

6. Mr. Cook announced a planned land swap of the Strazulla property with 2,000 acres of land in the Loxahatchee Refuge to be used as a future expansion of STA 1W which could provide future hunting opportunities.
7. Mr. Cook announced a good recreation presentation was given to the WRAC on March 5, 2015 and asked that the presentation be brought to the District's Governing Board.

#### Possible Future Meeting Topics

1. Review current recreational uses allowed on the Drasdo unit in the KCOL area.
2. Presentation on the equestrian/fox hound training events.

### **3. Overview of Florida Atlantic University's Center for Environmental Studies at DuPuis Management Area - Kim Kanter, Education & Training Coordinator, FAU/CES (15p 5d)**

Kim Kanter discussed the programs and opportunities provided by the FAU/CES.

#### Discussion

Participants asked several questions including what are the operating hours, how students find out about the program, and what areas do the students come from that visit the Center. Ms. Kanter informed attendees of the hours of operation and told them that students come from various areas and are of a diverse composition. She also provided that press releases are sent out regarding the events.

District staff thanked Ms. Kanter for her enthusiasm and the work she is doing relative to the success of the Center.

### **4. Surplus Lands Update – Ray Palmer, Section Leader, Leasing and Real Estate Support, Real Estate Division, SFWMD (15p 10d)**

Ray Palmer provided an update on the District's surplus lands program.

#### Discussion

A participant asked what the delay was on the Strazulla property. Mr. Palmer responded one of the Governing Board members wanted some additional information and pulled the item until next month.

Mr. Cook asked which property was 8,712 acres. Mr. Palmer responded that was a US Sugar parcel located at the northern end of the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) that has already been exchanged for 4,500 acres to facilitate the STA1W expansion.

Mr. Palmer informed the group that they could see the parcels by going to the District's website under the Land Assessment webpage and clicking on the surplus lands link.

He said the page also contains a series of maps and a list of all of the properties that were being considered as part of the land assessment process and will be considered for surplus.

Mr. Cook said about three years ago there was a lot of concern about losing public lands but that concern has gone away because there is a lot of trust for what the District is trying to do because surplus lands must be turned over.

**5. Kissimmee River Restoration Project Update - David Colangelo, Principal Federal Policy Analyst, Office of Everglades Policy & Coordination, SFWMD (15p 10d)**

David Colangelo provided a Kissimmee River Restoration project update.

Discussion

Parties thanked the District for their work on this project and commented that the old channelized canal is now virtually undetectable.

Attendees discussed access issues and thanked the District for providing access to its property. Attendee asked about the effort it took to have CSX Railroads to make the railroad bridge high enough for airboats to go through. Mr. Colangelo responded the process took a long time, but staff worked with CSX to complete the project.

Participant asked for a time frame for the removal of the S65C boat ramp and about moving the paved road. Staff responded that the contract is being rewarded in 2016 and the contractor will decide when it will be removed after that point. Staff reported the paved road will be moved back to the 100-year flood line which is far past the oxbow. A comment was received about new signage prohibiting dry airboat launching. A participant asked that any future signage similar to this be discussed at future WRAC RIW meetings prior to posting.

**6. Public Use Projects - Dan Cotter, Section Leader, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD (15p 20d)**

Dan Cotter provided an update on public use projects and facilities on District lands. The presentation included an overview of the existing airboat signage line on the Kissimmee River and the District's recommendation to repost the signage.

Discussion

Participants thanked staff for working quickly to organize the Kissimmee River airboat signage field visit in Pool C to evaluate the existing airboat signage. Participants also offered volunteer assistance for reposting signage if needed in the future.

An attendee suggested the need to start reposting signage now and not waiting until later in the summer and that there should be a way to document the location of the

signs once in place. There was also a suggestion that regulatory signage should include all vessels.

A participant asked if there will be a refuge for wildlife. Mr. Cook said wildlife does not pay attention to airboats as they become used to airboat engine noise.

A question was raised about why the District requires a special use license for camping and what is the associated cost? Staff informed the group that special use licenses are free and are generally required in areas with limited recreational capacity. The license ensures users have enough access to facilities and limits overcrowding. The license can be obtained instantly online if there is availability.

A participant asked if consideration had been given for limiting where airboats can operate and the hours they are allowed to operate to keep them from waking up campers, specifically in the Oak Creek camping area. Staff responded that the District has no plans to limit the times of operation. The participant suggested the District charge a fee for public access to its lands which led to a discussion regarding liability associated with charging fees to access District lands. Mr. Cook stated that he hoped Amendment 1 funds will be distributed to the District and FWC to help with the cost of providing free public access.

**7. DuPuis Campground Grant Proposal - Dan Cotter, Section Leader, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD (10p 5d)**

Dan Cotter discussed a grant proposal to replace a restroom facility at the DuPuis campground.

Discussion

Comments were made included ensuring the restroom is modern and large enough to accommodate the number of people that visit the site.

The Chairman signed a letter of support on behalf of the WRAC RIW participants to fulfill one of the requirements of the grant.

**8. Update on Public Use Areas - Jerry Krenz, Sr. Planner, Land Stewardship Section, Field Operations and Land Management Division, SFWMD (10p 10d)**

Jerry Krenz discussed several public use updates on District lands.

Discussion

Participants asked about the limited access to the Rocky Glades site and if there is a closer point that could be used to access the area. Staff responded that expanding access has been difficult due to illegal dumping activities in the area.

Mr. Cook commented that the Dispersed Water Storage program is a good program for its intended use although it does not provide enough storage to help the estuaries. The Chairman continued that the C/23 and C/24 Parcel C area will provide additional habitat for ducks and recommends that this area be only temporarily closed during construction.

## **General Discussion**

Participants discussed fox trials that are authorized on the Dupuis Wildlife and Environmental Area and other FWC managed areas, the possibility of dogs chasing wildlife, and dogs not being retrieved at the end of the event. FWC explained that fox trials do not involve the taking of game but rather the dogs are trained to follow a scent trail established in the woods prior to the event. FWC stated that this use is allowed for certified groups under the current rules but is willing to take a look at the number of permits issued each year. FWC stated that the dogs are required to wear collars and this is a user group that should also be accommodated as long as they are following the rules and regulations for field trials and suggested the organization make a future presentation to the WRAC RIW. Staff stated that the District has never had a complaint about this type of activity and participants are limited to a certain number of trials each year.

A participant asked when construction will start on Rolling Meadows since it is currently closed for hunting. Staff responded that the permits are in hand but construction will commence shortly.

A participant asked about construction commencement on the Mecca property. Staff said that Mecca is going into construction soon.

A question was raised on why fishing is prohibited in the STAs. Staff responded the integrity of the water quality sampling data collected at the STAs was a concern. Staff responded that there are areas outside the STAs open for fishing and a portion of STA1E is open for bank fishing. District staff said that the area that is open in STA1E is outside the treatment area. Staff offered to provide a map of all of the areas that fishing is allowed around the STAs.

## **9. Adjourn 8:00**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 pm